

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONTRE 00640 062206Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 /023 W
-----023565 071140Z /21

R 062153Z APR 78
FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 263
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL QUEBEC
AMCONSUL TORONTO

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, PINR, CA
SUBJECT: DON JOHNSTON: POSSIBLE FUTURE GOC MINISTER

1. WELL KNOWN, HIGHLY REPUTABLE MONTREAL LAWYER DON JOHNSTON WAS NOMINATED LAST NIGHT AS LIBERAL PARTY CANDIDATE FOR WESTMOUNT RIDING IN UPCOMING FEDERAL ELECTION. AS MEDIA PUT IT, NOMINATION IN WESTMOUNT HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN A CORONATION -- NOT A RACE. THIS TIME THERE WERE FOUR CANDIDATES TO FILL BUD DRURY'S SEAT IN WHAT SEEMED TO BE A TIGHT RACE UNTIL THE BALLOTS WERE COUNTED. JOHNSTON WON AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY (58 PERCENT) ON THE FIRST BALLOT.

2. INASMUCH AS LIBERAL NOMINATION IN WESTMOUNT IS TANTAMOUNT TO ELECTION (UNLESS THE SKY FALLS IN), FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON PROBABLE NEXT MP FROM THAT DISTRICT MAY BE OF INTEREST.

3. JOHNSTON IS 41 YEARS OLD, PRODUCT OF MONTREAL HIGH SCHOOL, MCGILL UNIVERSITY AND A YEAR AT GRENOBLE. HE WAS CAPTAIN OF THE DEBATING TEAM AT MCGILL AND A GOLD MEDALLIST IN LAW. MARRIED TO THE FORMER HEATHER MACLAREN OF NEW BRUNSWICK AND FATHER OF FOUR DAUGHTERS. WAS FOR A WHILE A TENNIS PRO AND KEEPS HIS GAME EXTREMELY SHARP EVEN NOW. AS ATTORNEY BUILT HIS REPUTATION IN TAX LAW BUT LATEST TOUR DE FORCE WAS CASE
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RESULTING IN FINDING THAT BILL 101 (QUEBEC'S LANGUAGE LAW) IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL.

4. IN MORE PERSONAL TERMS, JOHNSTON IS BILINGUAL, LOW-KEY, AFFABLE, CHARMING. HE IS VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS "NOTHING NARROW OR MEAN ABOUT HIM" TO "TOO FAR RIGHT FOR A LIBERAL," WITH APPROPRIATE MODIFICATIONS BETWEEN THOSE EXTREMES. NONETHE-

LESS, NO ONE HAS ANY REALLY HARSH VIEWS. BY FRIENDS AND COMPETITORS ALIKE, HE IS CONSIDERED FAIR, ABLE, SENSITIVE. HE IS FRIENDLY TO THE U.S., I.E., NOT A RADICAL "CANADA-FIRSTER" TYPE NATIONALIST, WEDDED TO PRIVATE INDUSTRY OF NOT ONLY THE LARGE BUT SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE, WHO WOULD WELCOME OUR INVESTMENT HERE.

5. COMMENT: IF LIBERAL ARE AGAIN THE GOVERNING PARTY, IT MAY WELL MEAN A CABINET POST FOR THIS ANGLOPHONE QUEBECKER. FROM A U.S. STANDPOINT, IT COULD BE A LOT WORSE.
HARPER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NOMINATION, PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS, MINISTERS (DIPLOMATS)
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MONTRE00640
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780150-0656
Format: TEL
From: MONTREAL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780486/aaaacutk.tel
Line Count: 73
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a18d5cb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3055344
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DON JOHNSTON: POSSIBLE FUTURE GOC MINISTER
TAGS: PINT, PINR, CA, (JOHNSTON, DON)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a18d5cb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014